



Livestock and Seed Program Audit, Review, and Compliance Branch Quality System Audit Report

Applicant: Maryland Department of Agriculture
Program : National Organic Program - Accreditation for Organic Certification
Organizations – Annual Update
Location(s): Annapolis, Maryland
Audit Date(s): September 24, 2003
Audit File Number: NP3267AA
Action Required: No
Auditor(s): Beth Hayden, Auditor
Contact & Title: Valerie Frances, Organic Certification Program Director
E-mail Address: FranceVL@mda.state.md.us

AUDIT ACTIVITIES

On September 24, 2003, a representative of the USDA, Audit, Review, and Compliance (ARC) Branch reviewed the annual update information submitted by the Maryland Department of Agriculture's Organic Certification Program (Maryland) in Annapolis, MD, in compliance with section 205.510 of the National Organic Program regulations. The purpose of the audit was to assess Maryland's compliance to the USDA, AMS 7 CFR Part 205, National Organic Program (NOP), Final Rule. This report follows an on-site evaluation (**NP3119AA NC Onsite Report**) and two corrective action submissions to address the findings from the on-site audit. Much of the information obtained for the update report was provided through the on-site audit and corrective action process.

The Maryland Organic Program has been moved administratively to Grading Services under Director Deanna Baldwin. The new phone contact number for Valerie Frances is (410) 841-2719. In addition to the administrative change, the procedure for certification decision-making also has changed as a result of the on-site evaluation. The Maryland Organic Certification Advisory Committee, once responsible for recommending certification decisions to the Maryland Secretary of Agriculture, now is merely an advisory committee for the program. The Director, Grading Services, will make the certification decisions. Information regarding the Director's qualifications was provided and reviewed.

Several changes to the Quality Manual have been made to bring Maryland's procedures into compliance with the NOP including the certification, compliance and investigation procedures.

FINDINGS

Based on the information provided in the annual update material, the on-site inspection, and subsequent corrective action reviews, the Maryland Organic Program meets the requirements of 7 CFR Part 205. Non-compliances noted in corrective action report **NP3119AA CA Report** must be addressed within the time allotted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

I recommend that the Maryland Organic Program retain accreditation. A follow up on-site evaluation should be scheduled to verify that corrective actions and changes to the certification procedures have been implemented as stated.